

Sept. 18, 1992

Speaking for myself as one of the few people willing to go on record in the department in support of the division, and one who intends to be a part of it. However. . .

I would not wish to be a part of a division . . .

- that did not guarantee the academic freedom of every member of its faculty.

--My own experience in this department.

- that was not governed by its regular faculty in matters of promotion, hiring, salary, and curriculum.

--Brodkey.

- that absolutely compelled faculty to join it.

--Need a core faculty, hired in over time.

--Current faculty may wish to choose split appointments with American Studies, Humanities, and other programs.

--Faculty coming into the program from other departments.

- that substantially increased the number of lecturers or used lecturers to reduce the number of AI's employed.

--We've been down that road and it would be a professional dead-end for the division.

- that did not support innovative and challenging courses from many intellectual, literary, and political perspectives on the part of all its faculty, including AI's.

--We've been down that road and it would be a professional dead-end for the division.

- that did not in the long run substantially contribute to the reputation of this university and this department.

That said, why do I want a division as autonomous as the one presented to us by President Cunningham?

- My facetious answer: "So we don't have to have any more meetings like this."
- My serious answer: "So we don't have to have any more meetings like this."

--A cite for struggle, a field colonized by literary struggles.

--An expense of spirit in a waste of shame, with undergraduate students the victims.

--Why does the department--which has needed a new major for fifteen years, which needs to give more attention to its E 316 classes, which has the talent and the people to become one of the top ten departments in the country, why does it expend its energy in political battles over courses which most of those who will speak here today never will teach?

• But that is a negative reason. More compelling are the positive reasons for giving rhetoric and composition a room of its own.

--The first and most compelling is to guarantee over time that undergraduate students at the University of Texas get the best education in writing possible and that we measure that success not by how many big names we have on the faculty, but by the quality of writing students produce.

--In the last year, we have seen important progress in restoring the program.

But rhetoric and composition needs a place of its own to gather and control its resources and that is a second reason for the division. We need a place where faculty at all levels regularly meet to discuss the rhetoric and composition program as a whole, top to bottom, from E 306 and E E325M to E 379C and E398T--and, by faculty, I mean AIs, Lecturers, Tenure-track professors, and Tenured.

I am convinced that this will be impossible to do until the writing division can be responsible for its own decisions and for shaping its own future.

--Wayne Lesser in EC meetings I have attended frequently talked about a vision for the department he had. But no one talks about a vision for the writing program, no one has publically articulated a plan or idea of what the best rhetoric program in the country would look like.

--The writing division would be the place where we would be compelled to do that because those in the division would be responsible for the quality of writing instruction on this campus.

--Just as important, we would be a place identified with expository and non-fiction writing, a place to attract those in the community and in business who want to do something to improve writing instruction and writing research.

--Anyone who knows me well knows I am fond of automotive metaphors. Blasted for teaching a politically correct course called "Writing About the Automobile in American Culture"

--Saturn Division: change our culture, think faster, smarter, better. Not save something that is in the can, but strive for real excellence.